

## SEMINAR SERIES 2010

# Subjective wellbeing informing national policy on the allocation of resources

**Professor Robert Cummins** from the School of Psychology, Deakin University

**Date** Tuesday 23 March 2010

**Time** 12.30-1.30pm

**Location** Room 250, Level 2, Robert Webster Building  
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by Friday 19 March 2010

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**Professor Robert A. Cummins** has held a Personal Chair in Psychology at Deakin University since 1997. He has published widely on the topic of Quality of Life and is regarded as an international authority in this area. He is an Editor of the Journal of Happiness Studies.

This paper shows how the construct of Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) and its measurement can inform public policy. SWB is a normally positive sense of self, controlled by a management system called SWB Homeostasis. If this management system fails the resultant loss of positive mood is the condition of depression. These characteristics of SWB can be exploited to advise the allocation of resources within a nation by establishing a normative range for SWB for each country, such that the mean score from any population sub-group can be referenced against this range. If a sub-group mean lies below this range, it is indicative that the sub-group contains a high proportion of people who are depressed. This is diagnostic of groups who require more resources. Data from the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index are used to demonstrate the utility of SWB to detect such disadvantage in both geographic regions and demographic groups. Public policy which directs resources to disadvantaged population sectors identified in this manner, may be one of the most effective means to enhance population wellbeing and national productivity.